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MATERNAL LETTERS,

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MATERNAL LETTERS

TO

A YOUNG LADY

ON HER

ENTRANCE INTO LIFE

L O N D O N :

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MATERNAL LETTERS

TO

A YOUNG LADY.

MY DEAR,——

YOU are now of an age, when, if your character is not absolutely formed; in the opinion of the world, at least, it must soon be determined. You are about to leave the peaceful scenes of tranquil life, and to engage in the tumult of gaiety and dissipation: while, therefore, you stand upon the threshold of a world, so new, so full of gay delights and smiling pleasures, let me awaken

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your

Our attention to the warning voice of maternal affection.

As the foundation of every virtue and amiable qualification, the principles of our most excellent Religion have been instilled into your mind from the time your mind was capable of receiving them: and I have observed, with inexpressible pleasure, that while your reason assented to its sacred truths, your heart was warm and fervent in the discharge of its duties. But, alas! how is that satisfaction clouded with fears when I look into the world, and see virtues equally fair and promising, so frequently lost in the vortex of fashion, gaiety, and dissipation. The task is, indeed, very difficult, though I trust that you will perform it, to preserve the influence of religion undiminished,

minished, where almost every scene and every society will conspire to banish serious reflections: where the ill-natured sarcasm or insidious jeer, on the serious and well disposed, is conveyed in the seducing language of vivacity and wit; where vices are not only extenuated, but rendered even agreeable by false sophistry; and goodness is dressed up by ridicule, in the garb of cold formality and forbidding austerity.

But let me not terrify you with a picture of the world so unlike to that which your first fancy has been pleased to form. It is my design rather to guard you against the contagion of bad example, without wholly destroying the pleasing prospects of your youthful imagination. I do not wish to send you disgusted into the paths of social life, but

to fill your mind with that degree of preparation, which will enable you to avoid, or triumph over, the common evils of it. You will, I doubt not, meet with those who are deserving your esteem; you may, I hope, frequently, find those societies where the disposition to pleasure and vivacity is not gratified at the expence of reason and moral duty.

As there will now be a considerable change in the disposal of your time, which, in the world, cannot be wholly at your own command, I must earnestly recommend you to observe those stated periods of devotion, which have hitherto formed so principal a part of your duty and delight. Let no day pass without the morning prayer and evening sacrifice: for, believe me, if you once suffer business or pleasure to interrupt your daily
duty

duty to a beneficent Creator ;—if you can once turn your thoughts from these solemn and important offices, without compunction and remorse, the influence of piety is already banished from your mind, and you will be in a state to receive all the evil propensities, to which our unhappy nature is but too subject. In the noise and tumult of dissipation, the deviations from rectitude are almost imperceptible; while our own deceitful hearts are ever prompt, not only to offer a palliation for our errors, but sometimes even to make attempts towards their justification. I therefore repeat my most serious admonition, not only to persevere in the duty of private devotion and public worship, but to pass some part of every day in the wholesome and efficacious duty of communion with your own heart. There is

no situation which will not allow of some small portion of time to be so employed ; for were your avocations far more numerous, and your social duties far more pressing than they are, at present, likely to be ; I should still insist on the necessity of appointing the salutary season of reflection and retirement.

That your happiness, even in this world, is inseparably connected with your religious and moral conduct, is, I trust, a leading principle of your belief; nor is it, as you well know, from a distrust of your present sentiments, that I thus address you: for, were I sure that your present character were incapable of being changed, I should leave you to yourself without the shadow of an apprehension, and you would receive no further counsel or caution from me. But it
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is from the innocent and amiable presumption of your youthful heart that all my fears arise. Warm, open, and unsuspecting, you almost deride the possibility of any change in your sentiments and opinions; and, with still greater impatience, you hear the suggestion of becoming cold and indifferent to virtues, now so pure and fervent. But know, from that experience which you cannot doubt, that this purity and fervour will not, nay cannot be, maintained without the continual cultivation of religious principles, and the practice of religious duties.

Vice would never be able to boast such a numerous train of votaries, if she could not clothe herself in the most seducing form, and throw around it every attraction adapted to allure the passions, and
deceive

deceive the weakness of our erring nature. She strews her path with flowers, and gives such a gay and brilliant colouring to her seductions, that the youthful heart is too often irretrievably involved in her snares, before it suspected any danger.

Who, on beholding the lovely form and attractive graces of Belinda, could harbour an idea injurious to the goodness of her heart?—The winning smiles of her countenance, and the artless gaiety of her manner, seem to bespeak a mind as lovely as her person. Exempt as she is from the actual commission of any crime, she might, by the generality of people, be considered as undeserving of censure; but it is my duty to convince you, that a mere freedom from guilt cannot be denominated virtue. What friend

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or relation has any reason to bless her as the assuager of their sorrows, or the companion of their distress? She, who flies from every scene which awakens sensibility, and stifles, in the tumult of the world, and the hurry of dissipation, every nobler feeling of the soul. That piety, which was instilled into her mind by the education of her early years, she considers as altogether incompatible with the character of a fashionable woman. To shine in the sphere of elegant life appears to gratify her fondest desires. It is most true, that her beauty is admired, her wit extolled, and her manners imitated; and so far, indeed, her situation appears to have some kind of attraction; but, when a few years are past and gone, her beauty will be faded, the world will have lost its
novelty;

novelty; and, from disappointed hope, and the satiety of pleasure, she will turn, in vain, to the resources of her own mind, and the animating reflections of active virtue; for her mind will, at best, be a dreary void, where no remembrance of active virtue is to be found. Accomplishments she may still possess; but accomplishments are like flowers without fragrance, unless they adorn some substantial virtue. Accomplishments may amuse the crowd, but will never make friends, unless they are accompanied with more solid qualifications. In short, mere accomplishments will never atone for exiled reason, or the loss of reflection; nor will they alone form those ties of affection, which are the charm, the honour, and the consolation of life. Religion, indeed, the never failing resource
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of the wretched, is still before her; but can such a mind as her's, so tainted with the gaieties of the world, be expected to seek consolation in the sober offices of religion; or drown her regret of former pleasures in the grave and solemn exercise of piety? I should rather fear, from the habits of her life, and the turn of her mind, that the evening of her life will have nothing to cheer it but the wearisome continuance of fashionable pleasures; and a frame, exhausted by the vigils of fashionable life. Nor will she have any remembrance of benevolent, generous, and friendly virtues, or the discharge of any painful duties, to be opposed to that waste of time, which has, from her early to her later years, been monopolized by dissipation and vanity.

To speak to you of sorrows and disappoint-

appointments, when every scene presents a picture of encreasing joys, is to address you on a subject, which your gay, eager heart may imagine rather to be dictated by the harsh severity of age, than drawn from the circumstances of real life : but, alas ! a few, a very few years, will convince you, that my pen has given a faithful portrait of the world. You will then experience how the most favourite hope is disappointed ; what a fleeting thing pleasure is ; that, even in the most fortunate situation, our sex will find a daily and encreasing necessity to practise the virtues of patient endurance and resignation ; and that the trials to which we are exposed become doubly painful by the characteristic tenderness and sensibility of our natures. Men may seek relief from misfortune and sorrow in a thousand ways

ways from which women are altogether excluded: they may apply to the occupations of business, and the cheering charm of society, which they can find at every hour, and in every place.— They may have a resource in the firmness of their philosophy, or the physical strength of their natures, and sometimes even in the manly pride of their minds, when afflicted by adversity: but women, who lose the distinguishing charm of their character, when they obtrude their conduct on the public eye, must carry the anguish of their hearts into privacy and retirement: their consolation must be derived solely and entirely from the influence of religion; which, though it is the best source of fortitude to all, seems to be the only one allotted to them.

In the greater calamities of life, religion will afford consolation: but it will at once dissipate and dispel all trivial vexations, and annihilate that peevish temper and capricious disposition to which our sex are so frequently subject. But you cannot expect to pass through life without experiencing more or less of its afflictions. You may be the victim of calamity, you may suffer the pains of sickness, and become infirm from disease; you may be forsaken by friends, and insulted by enemies; but, in these distresses, to which human nature is so continually subject, you will find inexpressible comfort in pouring forth your heart to that Being who knows the issues of it, whose tender care is over all his works, and who looks down with pity on the sorrows of
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of virtue. He may not grant your petition, for his wisdom only knows what is best for us ; but the habitual confidence in his paternal care will, at least, beget that resignation to his will, which is sufficient to bear us through the storms and tempests of life, to the haven of everlasting peace.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS.

It would be needless for me to expatiate on this subject: for how easily would my wishes be gratified for you, if the term, *an accomplished woman*, had in my mind, the same acceptation which is generally annexed to it. To dress, to dance, to sing, to play, and to be engaged in a round of frivolous pursuits, is all that the greatest part of young women think necessary: but far different is the character I wish you to assume, and far different the light in which I hope to see you regarded. I appreciate, as they deserve, those ornamental acquisitions which are the delight

light of society, and enliven the pleasures of retirement ; and, if you have a genius for music, or drawing, or even both, you will do well to cultivate it ; if, at the same time, you consider *them* as the *amusements*, and not the business of life : for you will do well to remember, that all the pleasure which harmony can afford to the ear, or painting to the eye, will add but little towards rendering you really useful to your family, or happy in yourself. If to such pursuits as these every moment is dedicated, how is it possible you can fix those principles which are to regulate your conduct ? or how will you acquire those amiable qualities which are the real and lasting ornaments of social life ?

A disposition at once mild, patient, gentle, and unassuming, *I* consider as

the first accomplishment, because it is the most necessary for your own peace, and the comfort of those with whom you are connected : nor is a well-regulated temper, that leading charm of the human character, so easily obtained as too many fondly imagine. For, though nature may have given you softness, it is study and reflection which must preserve it from degenerating into insipidity. Your heart must also be deeply affected with pious sentiments, if you would gain that necessary patience, which is not more nearly allied to true fortitude than removed from insensibility. That you may avoid the pert forwardness of manner, the conceit which springs from ignorance and folly ; all the higher powers of your mind must be daily called into exercise : they must
expand

expand beyond the little circle of idle trifles, and still farther beyond the boundary of self-love, that you may be capable of contemplating the excellencies of others, and of imitating them yourself.

On the point of accomplishments, therefore, *consider* that to DAZZLE is far less desirable than to acquire solid comfort: that virtue is our highest praise, and that elegant attainments are only valuable when they are the ornaments of an amiable and well-instructed mind.

With respect to books, I cannot but wish that your reading should be much more extensive than women in general think expedient; I would recommend such as appeal to the head as well as to the heart; such as will give an elevation

vation of sentiment, without leading you into abstruse or learned subjects. Natural and civil history may alone prove the subjects of agreeable and useful study: the first is particularly worthy the attention of a reasonable being; but, alas! nature in vain offers her productions to the greater part of women; they, alas! have no hearts but for the observation of trifles. Small, however, is the attention necessary to remark the admirable harmony which is found in every part of the world; and she must be lost to all sense of the beautiful and sublime, who has no desire for that knowledge, which opens to her all the treasures of nature, and displays the wonderful wisdom and goodness of their great Creator.

Young women in general, and those
particularly

particularly who have had no great advantages of education, should be extremely cautious in avoiding such works as may enervate the mind, soften the heart, or awaken the passions. *Bad*, indeed, must that book be in which the judicious and well-informed mind may not find some merit, some useful or moral truth, on which alone it will dwell; whilst every unworthy part is passed by with the censure it deserves. Far different is the case with the generality of female youth; their sensibility unrestrained, because never directed towards proper objects, is open alike to every impression: but she whose taste has been refined by the perusal of well chosen books, whose mind has been cultivated with care, and strengthened by reflection, needs not to be cautioned
with

with respect to her studies: for her, the romance has lost its danger, as the softness of her heart is corrected by the solidity of her judgment.

Books have too much influence over the mind for me not to desire your frequent attention to such as treat of the most serious subjects. To the honour of religion, many of the first works in our language are on subjects of devotion; if you have any degree of piety, these cannot fail to delight you in the perusal: and the good impresson they will leave on the mind is the best proof of their excellence. I do not, however, mean to confine you to this kind of reading; on the contrary, I wish it to be of a more comprehensive nature. If you do but chuse such subjects as tend to adorn the mind and improve the heart: such
knowledge

knowledge will be a treasure which will compensate for the ravages of time, and render you beloved, when the person is no longer lovely.

Among all the accomplishments which young ladies take so much pains to acquire, I have often lamented that the most useful are usually the most neglected; and duties which are in every situation *alike* indispensable, are disregarded as if they belonged to none.—Economy, and domestic concerns, the fine lady deems wholly beneath her notice; and is indolently content to be considered as a cypher in her own house, rather than exert that laudable attention to her private affairs which would gain her respect from every sensible and discerning person; and, at the same time, enable her to encrease

crease the means of gratifying that benevolence, which, to a noble mind, is the highest source of gratification. An attention to these duties is, in every sense, your supreme interest; for however superior talents may dazzle and delight, it is this useful knowledge alone which gives that consequence to a mistress of a family that she ought to possess: for inferiors are seldom willing to pay obedience, where they do not find an ability to command.

An husband, however highly he may appreciate your more elegant accomplishments, will be greatly disappointed if you know not how to accommodate yourself to the inspection of those affairs he may commit to your charge. If he is tender and affectionate, he will be anxious that you should possess his
entire

entire confidence: in your society he will wish to be unreserved in every communication; but how can he converse on those necessary subjects, which relate to the management of his fortune, with one, whose mind is totally estranged from all domestic concerns? For of this you may be assured, that, when he meets not the bosom friend he expected to find, he will look with regret, to say no worse, on these fine talents and exterior accomplishments which first caught his admiration, and pay with many a sigh a sincerer homage to less brilliant, but more useful qualifications. Nothing, however, is more evident than that the useful and elegant qualities of the female character, are naturally calculated to harmonize with, to support and set off each other. Accomplishments

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give a certain elevated cast to the most simple acts of domestic duty; while a proper and becoming to the latter, operating in some degree on the former, gives them a sort of solid character which in themselves they cannot be said to possess. Taste, a love of elegance, and a disposition to refinement, will serve but to lead you into extravagance and dissipation, unless corrected by that love of home which must spring from the knowledge of its comforts, and the discharge of its cares. Whereas, on the other hand, mere management and economy, without the charms of accomplishment, will scarce place the wife above the situation of an house-keeper. The union I recommend, will give a degree of dignity to your manner of discharging every domestic office; will

will render you respectable in your own opinion, and the opinion of your family ; will teach you to place the most trivial of your duties, above the most captivating of your talents, and on all occasions to prefer your duty to your pleasure. Your mind being thus enlarged by useful knowledge, and your sentiments elevated and refined by literary pursuits, you will learn to form just notions of the dignity of human nature; and, of course, be ashamed to employ the noble powers of an immortal soul, in the little round of those frivolous pleasures and useless pursuits which are unfortunately the chief delight of so many of your sex.

Elevation of character cannot fail to produce that happy state of mind, and those just notions of propriety which

tend to the perfection of human conduct. Did you possess these, there would be little occasion for me to expatiate on the subjects of dress, manners, and appearance in the world.

An introduction into public life is generally deemed necessary to form the manners; and there can be no doubt but it will teach that artificial polish, that fashionable ceremony, which may fit you for the transitory hours of dissipation; but the politeness which never varies, and the manners which are uniformly pleasing, are only to be learned from principles rightly formed, and an heart open to the impressions of social affection. The good breeding, which is inspired by good temper, is not dependent on any particular society; and she who is so fortunate as to possess it, will
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be as delicate in her attentions in the circle of private friendship, as if the whole world were the witness of her actions.

With respect to drefs, that tedious study, which engrosses so much the attention of our sex, I shall add but a few words, for I trust the purity of your mind will best teach you that modesty, simplicity, and neatness, are the most proper, as well as becoming, ornaments. Remember that fine clothes can add nothing to real beauty, whilst they render the defects of a plain person more conspicuous; that an observance of every fantastical fashion, will lead you into vanity and extravagance, which must be gratified at the expence of generosity and benevolence.

Women drefs to please, and to be admired; but they are totally mistaken,

when they fancy this point gained by magnificent and costly habits. If you would once establish the opinion that nothing is becoming but what is proper for your station; that what you can exactly afford, is a thousand times more handsome than all you can add to it; you would never be led into a deviation from discretion and prudence. The appearance which other people make is not to be entirely the standard of your own; if *they* chuse to be extravagant there is no reason why you should imitate a bad example. There is a propriety which ought to be visible in dress as well as manner; but it consists not in finery, habitual neatness and simplicity in your attire, I cannot sufficiently recommend; because, among other advantages, they form a very strong

strong personal recommendation to persons of real discernment and understanding. The world will ever judge from appearances, and how can a favourable opinion be formed of either the heart or the mind from the sight of a dirty morning dress, or the overloaded trappings of the evening finery.

In considering manners, or that exterior behaviour which is necessary in general society, I am naturally led to remark on those of the present times; which, though I do not mean to involve them in one undistinguished censure, are too subject to levity, pertness, and assurance. Dignity, grace, and mildness, the most attractive charms of woman, are not so much the mode as they ought to be. Masculine appearance, and masculine expressions are too frequently

frequently adopted ; and it is not now uncommon to hear the most beautiful lips utter words, which even a libertine would not have dared to use before a female, in better times ; when decorum was considered as a virtue, and modesty was regarded as the commanding feature of the female character. Who can wonder, therefore, that the influence our sex ought to possess over the minds of men, is so weakened, that they frequently prefer the meanest diversions, the gaming-house, and “ long protracted feast,” to our company ; and when they approach us, they often bring into our company the manners, conversation, and familiarity of their own society, instead of those obliging attentions, amiable reserve, and chaste behaviour, which is best suited to ours.

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When, however, on *our* part, no indignant frowns testify a displeasure of such manners, when no modest blush shall speak the purity of the female mind ; men are not to be condemned for improper conduct ; the fault is *wholly ours* : and it must be the reformation in *our* manners which can alone restore that true good breeding which is so opposite to the fashionable ease, or rather impudent familiarity of the present day. Be it, however, your part, singular as it may be, to suffer your *principles* to govern your *actions* : do not, I beseech you, let the contagion of bad example influence even your exterior appearance, much less affect your manners and conversation. But, above all things, guard the principles of virtue, of honour, and which includes them both,
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of religion, from being contaminated by the blandishments of dubious pleasures and prevailing dissipation. For if you once sacrifice these to the fashions of the world, there is an end of real happiness; the sources of it will be poisoned, and all purity of mind, and dignity of character will be lost for ever, or restored only by a long and painful course of contrition and repentance.

ATTACH-

ATTACHMENTS.

THE subject of this letter, my dear ———, awakens in my mind a thousand fears and apprehensions. I, who know how much the happiness of life depends on the right direction of the feelings of the heart, cannot too strongly warn you against the danger of suffering them to rebel against the dictates of reason.

On your entrance into the world, the novelty of its pleasures will transcend your warmest expectations. Admired and delighted, you will, perhaps, for a time, remain unsusceptible of any passion which can powerfully effect your sensibility; but, when the tumult of
gaiety

gaiety shall subside, when it shall become indifferent because no longer new ; you will almost insensibly fix your ideas on some plan of future happiness, and as an *ingredient*, if not as the *foundation*, the romantic spirit of young minds will readily suggest an attachment.

How sincere is my wish that you should find in *yourself* sufficient resources to prevent your indulgence of futile expectations, and romantic dreams. I should hope that the *present* might be always *so* employed, that you need not be too eager in the anticipation of the *future*.

In your conduct towards men, I do not mean to recommend any unnecessary reserve, or the affectation of prudery ; on the contrary, I have always judged the society of the few who are
worthy

worthy of your esteem, to be at once instructive, pleasing, and consistent with the nicest propriety: their friendship, if you are so happy as to possess it, may be highly beneficial to you, may teach you to call into exertion all the better powers of the mind, and to estimate, as they deserve, the pleasures of a cultivated understanding. With such characters, ingenuoufness can never lead to danger; and I trust, that I shall always observe, from your decided preference of superior merit, the strength and delicacy of your judgment. For the woman who listens, with smiles of equal approbation, to the impertinence of a coxcomb, or the address of a sensible man, demonstrates at once, that she has no susceptibility of what is right, or that some unworthy narrow

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motive

motive influences her conduct : so that, whilst she augments the vanity her frowns should repress, she forfeits the good opinion she should be so anxious to deserve.

With respect to that particular attachment, which has so powerful an influence over the youthful heart, I must endeavour to point out its danger ; and to shew you how destructive to your peace any passion must be, which can subdue the powers of reason.

A virtuous affection, well founded, and properly regulated, is, without doubt, one of the sweetest sources of terrestrial happiness ; and I should indeed be lost to all feeling if I could wish to lessen its influence.—But girls are apt to mistake every transient liking for a fixed and permanent regard ; and to yield
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so entirely to the power of a romantic imagination, that they often trifle away their peace of mind, and waste their lives in idle dreams and futile expectations ; their vanity too, conspires to form ridiculous hopes, and impracticable schemes of happiness ; and many a young woman has given her heart to him, of whose undivided affection she fancied herself secure ; when, on his part, there was not, perhaps, a thought beyond general esteem, or the attentions of common civility. It arises from a total want of serious reflection, that your repose is so frequently endangered ; for friendship and approbation will be imperceptibly heightened into tenderness, unless you accustom yourself to the solitary examination of the sentiments that agitate your heart.

I will suppose, for instance, that you are frequently in the society of a sensible, worthy, man (for I cannot support the idea of a contrary character making even a momentary impression upon you), whose affections you believe to be disengaged ; and, by degrees, from being pleased with his agreeable manners, it occurs to you, that he testifies a preference by his respectful attentions : for them you feel yourself obliged ; and, if unfortunately to a want of reflection, is added a disposition to be idle and unemployed, I know not what can save you from yielding to the romantic fervour of a passion, which, perhaps, fortune, reason, family, and friends, equally condemn. When you are absent from the object of your regard, imagination pictures, in addition to his
real

real good qualities, a thousand others which he does not possess. In contemplating this picture often, not merely his errors, but the weaknesses of humanity are forgotten; and *perfection* is fancied, where *perfection never can* exist; and the object, thus deified, becomes the idol to which you sacrifice your peace, your reason, and your health. In his presence this illusion is still stronger; every slight expression of proper politeness is interpreted as the language of tenderness; nay, so powerful, in such a case, are the suggestions of vanity, and of an heated imagination, that his very reserve, his silence, and his neglect, is considered as testimonies of diffidence, prudence, or delicacy: and, at length, your conduct will be so influenced by these ideas, that, for his

fake, you become indifferent, not only to the amusements and occupations suitable to your age, but to the society you before so happily enjoyed, and so deservedly esteemed. You will be fortunate indeed, if, after all, he does not leave you to that state of severe mortification, which arises from disappointed passion, and to the bitter reflections which insulted vanity, and neglected reason, will inevitably produce.

I do not mean to extenuate the evil conduct of those men, who are ever ready to address the language of tenderness to the female heart; and who ungenerously trifle with young women's affections; but it cannot be too strongly inculcated, that our sex have no right to believe an attachment, till an honourable and open declaration is made.

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Why indeed should men, even the most diffident and unassuming, be slow to acknowledge the sentiments of a sincere regard? since they all well know, that such a distinction, and such a preference, must be gratifying even to the proudest; for how cold a heart must that woman possess, who feels not a very powerful obligation towards that man who prefers her to the rest of her sex.

But let us suppose that a worthy and excellent man entertains an affection which motives of prudence determine him to conceal; (for this I believe is the idea which women generally indulge), she must be very ungenerous who wishes, by the discovery of her own tenderness, to overpower suggestions which never ought to be disregarded. In such a case mistaken notions of honour, uniting with inclination, induce
him

him to form a connection which prudence does not sanction; and though he becomes the husband of the woman he loved, he will soon find that happiness is seldom found in the married state, when duty is violated, and fortune inadequate. Distresses, and pecuniary distresses, which are of all others the most insupportable to refined dispositions, and the most inimical to the fond affections of wedded life, fill their minds with a mutual regret; the dream of happiness passes away; and it is well if disgust and hatred do not complete the measure of their misery.

Never can it be sufficiently instilled into the female mind, how necessary it is, that women should endeavour to suppress the rising weakness; and to acquire that fortitude which will not suffer them to shelter, under the name of sensibility,

fenfibility, thofe deviations from reafon and duty, which deceive fo many by their fond illufions into a ftate of wretchednefs and difhonour. But, I trust, your mind will be fo occupied by ufeful purfuits, and improving ftudies, that it will not find room for the admiffion of thofe falfe opinions, romantic ideas, and affectation of fentiment, which are oftentimes fo fatal to female happinefs.

Should it ever be your fate (but Heaven proteét you from a fate fo wretched) to fuffer thofe cruel difappointments, which too often await the fincereft attachments ;—Engaged, perhaps, to fome amiable man, whofe virtues and tendernefs for you will enable your reafon to fanction the moft fervent affection ; whilft they feem to promife all that you defire of future happinefs ; if,
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at the very moment of anticipating years of felicity, the relentless hand of adversity shall separate you for ever; To add severity to the blow, it may perhaps be your sad part, urged by the obligations of duty, fortitude, and the ultimate good of the object you prefer, to break those ties which you once fondly hoped to render indissoluble: this is, indeed, a trial full of pain and anguish; which awakens the sincerest commiseration in every human breast.

In such a situation, to check the first effusions of sorrow, would be alike unfeeling and ineffectual; yet there are other and better consolations to be derived from reason and piety, which a well informed mind will always suggest: these will inform you that you have duties to fulfil which forbid an
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indulgence of grief, that will not only destroy your health and repose, but render you unfit for the necessary avocations of life. A benevolent spirit still remains to afford you comfort and satisfaction; and let your sensibility be exercised, not in deploring your own inevitable evils, but in mitigating the distresses of others; this is the most likely method of restoring your tranquillity; and if, sometimes, the remembrance of your own particular sorrows shall intrude on your mind, listen to the dictates of reason; check the efforts of a gloomy imagination; resist all fallacious opinions; and you will find much less cause to repine at what you endure, than to be thankful for what you possess. Fear not to examine your heart because it is sore from past afflictions;

tions ; for remember, that the most secret wounds require the deepest probing ; and it is not by common efforts, or ordinary fortitude, that you will be enabled to undergo such a trial with resignation and dignity. Occasional retirement will do much more than the hurry and bustle of indiscriminate society ; the latter may for a moment occupy your attention ; but the mind, wearied and exhausted by it, becomes doubly susceptible of painful emotions. *Zimmerman*, in his incomparable essay on solitude, entertains the same opinion, when he says, “ Etre loin du tumulte
“ des hommes, c’est la plus douce consolation dans tous les maux, que le
“ coeur ne peut oublier.”

Continued, yet varied, occupations, books that strengthen your understanding,

ing, and call forth your piety, and society that will interest your friendship, must at length prove effectual in subduing sorrow; but, wholly to conquer an attachment for an object deserving of your affection, and of whom you still continue to entertain your early impressions, is, perhaps, impossible: for how can you remember the virtues which first inspired your regard, and cease to pay them the tribute of tender esteem? if, indeed, you should have been deceived in the character you preferred; if you can discover but a single quality that would disgrace your approbation; you must be destitute of all female pride, and nobleness of spirit, if you are slow to conquer such an ill-founded attachment.

It is widely different in a sacrifice

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made entirely to duty ; and it is much to be lamented, that too many women, flying from the examination of their own hearts, and influenced by unworthy motives of vanity, interest, and the persuasions of friends, are often induced to give their hand to one, whilst another is the possessor of all their tenderness and affection, The weakness and impiety of her mind, who can act in this manner, is to be condemned equally with the cruelty and injustice of her parents. Unhappy she must become ! but, in her unhappiness, she will not deserve commiseration : every little error in him, with whom she is connected, will be magnified into unpardonable faults, whilst contrasted with the virtues of the object to which in secret she pays an unceasing homage.

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The sacred duties, which her station requires, are performed with coldness, reluctance, and indifference: how, indeed, can any duties be properly discharged, where there is no satisfaction annexed to the idea of fulfilling them? it is well, if thus situated, she can preserve the appearance of honour, and conduct herself in such a manner as to gain respect; I say appearance, since, in reality, and in the eyes of Heaven, her heart is already guilty.

Innumerable are the evils which result from that want of fortitude and strength of mind, which it seems rather the study of our sex to enervate and destroy, than to cherish and cultivate. A rational being surely ought to be capable of thinking, judging, and act-

ing for herself; she ought to understand the full force of all her duties; and, knowing these, to prefer to every other consideration to the dictates of reason, and the suggestions of conscience. Far from seeking to diminish the influence of the first of duties, that which we owe to our parents, I am convinced the more the mind is cultivated and improved, the more susceptible it will become of all its obligations; and especially of this the most sacred of them. A child is, indeed, undutiful when she rashly and precipitately forms a connection unfashioned by her parent's approbation; and there is little chance that she can be amiable as a *wife*, who has proved unworthy as a *daughter*! romantic ideas and want of
thought

thought are as apt to mislead the young, as too great an attention to interest is to govern the old.

After representing the misery and wickedness of becoming the wife to him who does not possess your affection; that I may not add to the illusions of sentiment, it is necessary I should say, that it is by no means requisite you should feel all that romantic attachment, which girls are apt to picture to themselves for the man who leads you to the altar. Esteem, founded on the knowledge of his character—gratitude for his partiality and decided preference, will be sufficient to render you both happy, since it will enable you to discharge your duties with alacrity and pleasure. Such a reasonable affection

will be more consistent, as well as more permanent, perhaps, than a violent passion ; but will, undoubtedly, enable you to be more respectable, because judgement, reason, and good sense, will be allowed to influence your conduct. To suffer any pecuniary advantages so to dazzle and attract, as to violate the best feelings of the heart, is so mean, so base, and so unjust, that to enlarge on the subject would disgrace me, as it would be unnecessary to you : for there can be no hope of ever reclaiming that mind, which is so poor, and so abject, as, for a moment, to indulge the thought of making such a sacrifice of the heart, and all its purest affections to the demon of wealth.

Suffer reason and duty to determine
your

your choice, and you will have no cause to apprehend the misery of painful reflections. Do not be too fondly allured by external circumstances, or allow the charms of wit, or insinuating manners, to prevent your attention to qualities of far higher estimation. Good sense and good principles, will secure your happiness, and assure you the warmest regard of your husband, if he possesses the character with which I hope to see you united. Virtue, piety, and benevolence, form the only security for lasting attachment: with these, though the charms of the person may fade—though sickness and age shall rob you of loveliness and grace, yet, still will you be dear to the good and affectionate heart; for, on the knowledge of your worth, and the excellence
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of your mind, his regard was founded ; and, time will therefore confirm and strengthen his affection.

However differently young women may think on the subject, I cannot but express it as my opinion, that the man who can entirely forget reason, duty, and prudence, in the choice he makes, and who is ready rashly to sacrifice every consideration to what he terms a violent attachment, gives but a poor promise of permanent affection. Pride and ambition, though they may be silenced for a short period, will probably resume their empire with added tyranny ; let her, therefore, who is placed in the humble walks of retired life, be careful how she is tempted to enter into a connection, in which, a feeling mind, will not find the want
of

of domestic harmony, compensated by luxury and magnificence. Unequal matches seldom fail to bring a portion of misery along with them; and here I cannot forbear to insert the following little story, which too truly exemplifies the lasting wretchedness which often results from connections, formed without a due share of thought and pre-consideration.

Matilda had all the advantages of beauty and merit. Her parents, though poor, were virtuous and noble-minded; and, persuaded that accomplishments, and a cultivated understanding, were preferable to any thing fortune can offer, they generously sacrificed every thing to their daughter's education: their care and attention was rewarded by her acquisition of every virtue, and
every

every talent which can adorn and elevate human nature : these, and the charms of her person, attracted daily admiration, whilst the amiable sweetness of her character secured her the friendship of all who knew her.

Dudley, the only son of a rich and noble family, saw Matilda by chance, and was struck by her uncommon beauty, and the extraordinary elegance of her deportment : anxious to be farther acquainted with her, he commanded one of his attendants to inform himself of her name, and the particulars of her situation, Dudley was amiable and pleasing ; and possessed a heart susceptible of strong affection. The accounts he received of Matilda heightened his passion for her, and he determined to introduce himself into
her

her society. Her parents received him with all the respect due to his birth and merit—his attachment became every hour more powerful; and, conquering all the dictates of duty, pride, and ambition, he determined to offer the most honourable proposals to Matilda's father: but this worthy old man had too much greatness of mind to make an ill use of such generosity, and replied, in terms which left Dudley nothing to hope:— “ If (said he) you could dispose
 “ of yourself, I might, perhaps, accede
 “ to your desires; but you are dependent on a father, whom nature and
 “ rectitude command you to obey; and
 “ *he*, I am sure, will never consent to
 “ an alliance so unworthy your rank,
 “ and so opposite to all the plans he has
 “ formed for your future establishment.”

“ment.” This refusal overwhelmed him with grief; but the death of his father, which happened very shortly afterwards, allowed him the liberty of avowing his choice, and revived all his former hopes. Nothing now opposed his happiness; and, again seeking the father of Matilda, he said—“When I
“first addressed you on this subject, you
“assured me, that had I been independent you would have granted my
“wishes: heaven has been pleased to
“remove the only obstacle to my
“felicity; may I not then claim your
“wife?” The father, dazzled by the prospect of so advantageous a connection, could urge no objection to the entreaties of Dudley; but he determined to enter into no engagement without his daughter’s approbation.

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Had this amiable girl obeyed only the dictates of affection, she would not have hesitated, for a moment, in acceding to the wishes of her lover; but the tenderness of her heart perverted not her judgement; she felt the full value of all he was ready to sacrifice for her sake, and looked forward to the hour, when ambition and duty would resume their power, and prompt an unavailing repentance. To the sorrow and surprize of Dudley, she thus replied—"Your rank, your merit, and your riches, give to you the right of forming the most brilliant alliance:—the honour of your family has never been sullied by any mean connection, and would you, Dudley, derogate from the law which your ancestors imposed on you, when they have never violated

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it?

“ it? If, indeed, the virtues of my pa-
“ rents could compensate for nobility,
“ you would not have to blush for my
“ birth; but we live in an age in
“ which honesty and rectitude are fri-
“ volous titles, if these qualities have
“ not high birth to support them. I
“ know that I could easily feign a
“ proud genealogy, but I scorn diffi-
“ mulation; and I see but one way of
“ rendering myself worthy of you,
“ which is—to refuse your hand. I
“ am confident that you love me ten-
“ derly; the proofs you give me, leave
“ no cause for doubt: but I should
“ be insensible to the voice of honour
“ and duty, if, abusing the power your
“ affection gives me over you, I could
“ suffer you to form an engagement so
“ contrary to your real advantage. You
“ will,

“ will, indeed, injure me to attribute
 “ this refusal to caprice ; no, Dudley !
 “ such motives could never actuate my
 “ conduct : I obey the dictates of ho-
 “ nour, to convince you how power-
 “ ful they are : I blush not to con-
 “ fess I love you, as tenderly as I am
 “ beloved : and this sentiment serves
 “ to strengthen my resolution, to reject
 “ the advantages you offer me : for
 “ my sincere attachment is *better* proved
 “ by refusing your proposals, generous
 “ as they are, than by *accepting* them.”

These sentiments served only to ren-
 der Dudley more urgent in his en-
 treaties. Love is eloquent, and Ma-
 tilda was at length persuaded to yield
 her consent ; but, at that moment, she
 was agitated by a pre-sentiment of fu-
 ture sorrow.—“ Alas !” (said she), “ you

“ will, perhaps, one day reproach my
“ too ready compliance; there is yet
“ time to dissolve an engagement that
“ a few hours will render indissoluble,
“ and which may be succeeded by
“ years of fruitless repentance; or, if
“ you are resolved to honour me with
“ your name, at least, remember that
“ my consent was wrung from me by
“ your entreaties.”

Dudley was, during a few years, enchanted with his felicity; but ambition soon succeeded love, and pride and magnificence wholly occupied his mind. His family could never pardon his connection with Matilda; so that, disturbed by their resentment, and tormented by the retrospect of what he now termed his folly, he determined on a separation. Matilda could no longer support this affliction—

affliction—her fortitude wholly forsook her—her health fell a sacrifice to grief ; and, at length, her physician declared to her, that she had only a few hours to live. The intelligence gave her no anxiety ; and she desired her husband's presence in her apartment, when she addressed him in these terms— “ Your
 “ happiness, Dudley, has ever been my
 “ dearest concern ; my whole conduct,
 “ indeed, forbids your doubt of it ;
 “ but, notwithstanding the security of
 “ my affection, you have, of late, been
 “ fatally anxious to break an engage-
 “ ment, from which my death will very
 “ soon release you. Life was only
 “ valuable to me, because I thought it
 “ essential to your happiness ; alas ! it
 “ is now your misfortune ; I bless hea-
 “ ven, which, in a few hours, will take

“ from me that existence, which, as it
“ is no longer dear to *you*, would be
“ insupportable to me. I ask you not
“ to love me when I am departed ; I
“ am contented, if you promise, that
“ my memory shall not be hateful to
“ you.” During this short conversation Dudley suffered an agitation he could not conceal ; his heart was torn by remorse ; he dared scarce raise his eyes to his unfortunate wife ; at length, perceiving already the horrors of death in that lovely countenance, which was once the object of his fondest admiration,—affection regained its influence ; and he would in vain recall her to life, by the most sacred vows of compensating for his errors by future tenderness and fidelity. These were too late ; the sensible heart of Matilda was broken
by

by affliction; and she died a fatal example of the misery which may arise from a connection which reason disapproves.

AMUSEMENT—REPUTATION—
HAPPINESS.

It is so much the taste of the present age to indulge in a constant round of dissipation and amusements, that I cannot forbear, my dear child, to offer my sentiments on the subject. I will endeavour to shew you how incompatible I consider the unrestrained pursuit of pleasure and diversion to be with that dignity and respect, which a young woman should pay to herself, if she expects to receive it from others. A life of fashionable gaiety is as injurious to all the finer feelings of the mind,

mind, as it is to happiness : it weakens, and sometimes destroys those resources which we derive from ourselves ; and few return from the hurry and tumult of the great world with the same modest simplicity, the same relish for pure and tranquil pleasures with which they entered it.—In such scenes, the most sacred of our duties will be often neglected ; the heart becomes susceptible of every dangerous impression ; the powers of reason and fortitude diminished by the want of reflection, are at length unable to withdraw us from that course of conduct into which we have been misled, and was, on our first entrance into public life, the object of our abhorrence.

The reasonable participation of proper amusements is both right and
suitable

suitable to your age; and provided they leave you leisure for necessary avocations, and the discharge of your essential duties, they are by no means to be censured; but very different, indeed, is this moderate share of tranquil amusement from that never ceasing pursuit of pleasure in which the great world is so continually engaged. Dress is their most important business, as to gratify vanity is their first wish: for this end, they hurry through every scene of dissipation and extravagance: of every thing that can give real value to existence they are fatally negligent; domestic comfort, friendship, and benevolence, the sweetest of our joys, to them are too often unknown; for, even on quitting the metropolis, the chief scene of their pride and luxury, they
carry

carry to their ancient, and once respected mansions (when for a few short months they can bear to visit them) society disposed like themselves, to neglect, or rather to be entirely insensible of, all the charms of nature ; while to the card-table and dice are given those delightful evenings, when a sensible mind, in the enjoyment of some solitary walk, becomes doubly susceptible of the pure and delicious sentiments of piety, gratitude, and admiration. Retirement, and the tranquil pleasures of the country, will never fail to awaken the most inspiring sensations in those hearts which are uncontaminated with the bad example of the world. How preferable such reflections ! How dear the peace which results from the cultivation

vation of virtue to all that dissipation can offer.

“ But the long pomp, the midnight masquerade,
“ With all the freaks of wanton wealth array’d;
“ In these ere triflers half their wish obtain,
“ The toiling pleasure sickens into pain;
“ And e’en while fashion’s brightest arts decoy,
“ The heart distrustful asks, if this be joy.”

How wretchedly do young women mistake their interest and happiness when they become the votaries of fashion and folly. If they expect to change their situation, and to become wives and mothers, they cannot suppose, for a moment, if they will indulge a moment’s reflection, that the qualifications requisite to form such characters can be obtained in scenes where no virtue is exercised, and where a
tendency

tendency to bad principles too generally prevails. Amongst these, would a sensible man, would any one who has a susceptibility of what is right; amongst these, I say, would he seek to form the dearest, and most intimate connections.— Oh, no! even the libertine, when he marries, seeks domestic dispositions, virtue, harmony of temper, and a cultivated understanding in the woman he destines to be his wife. At the same time, I cannot wish that your conduct should be governed by motives of interest, or be guided by the opinion of the world: let better principles influence you: be virtuous, and be good, from the real love of virtue, and of goodness; which is the only permanent foundation of excellence. If any meaner cause can influence you—if your heart is not ar-

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dent in the pursuit of what is right and best, or is cold to the calls of duty, you may, nevertheless, preserve appearances, and gain from the world an approbation which you do not deserve: but that internal peace, which springs from the consciousness of integrity; that fortitude with which great minds support their misfortunes, and conquer their temptations, can never be hers who assumes the semblance of virtue from the mercenary principle of promoting worldly interests.

To be altogether indifferent to the opinion of the world, betrays a very strange, if not depraved, state of insensibility. I would have you always consider it with some degree of deference and attention; but, at the same time, it should be ever governed or corrected by

by the voice of conscience. She who is delighted at the idea, that she lives, as it were, under the eye of an Almighty power, and whose chief comfort it is to feel a lively consciousness of his omnipresent power, has nothing to fear from the censures of the world; for the cultivation of these pious sentiments will produce that purity of mind which is the best, and, indeed, the only sure preservative from the contagion of vice.

This purity of mind, far from being an enemy to cheerfulness, and innocent pleasures, is the most decided promoter of them; and, far from laying any unnecessary restraint on a becoming vivacity, disdains all affectation of reserve, or severity. She who loves virtue for its own sake will desire its influence

to be extensive ; and will, therefore, wish her to appear in the most amiable colours. There are, unfortunately, too many who injure the cause of goodness by the gloomy harshness they think it requisite to assume : they abstract themselves from all the comfort which sweeten life, “ And show the steep and “ thorny way to Heaven.” That integrity, surely, can be of little estimation which fears to encounter the slightest temptation ; and, instead of shewing an example which others might delight to imitate, perverts all its power of doing good, by forbidding austerity

Though the men are frequently unjust and precipitate in the opinion they form of young women ; and though their unfavourable sentiments are generally owing to the degenerate habits

habits of their lives, yet, it must be acknowledged, that female conduct gives too frequent cause for censure. Let not, however, this consideration induce you to assume the ridiculous airs of prudery ; as, instead of being the guardian of virtue, they serve only to render it an object of suspicion. A sense of real modesty will influence you to be consistent in your manners ; and, at *no* time, to suffer any language, or the smallest familiarity, to violate that deference which the dignity of conscious virtue ought to exact. If any man should be so lost to delicacy, and decent decorum, as to offer improper conversation in your society, do not, by an affectation of ignorance, allow him to continue it, but dare to manifest the just resentment which purity of mind

will always dictate. Be indifferent to his censure, and consult alone what is due to yourself, and the character you would wish to maintain in the world.

If it is your lot to live a great deal in the metropolis, or even in a country town, where diversions are almost as eagerly pursued, determine on some plan which may prevent your devoting all your time to amusements, however innocent, or pleasures, however harmless in themselves; for, besides their tendency to render you unfit for the cultivation of your talents, and the acquisition of knowledge, it is incompatible with that decorum and sense of propriety so essential to the female character,—to live for ever in the public eye—to manifest an avowed eagerness
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for frequenting scenes of gaiety ; and a predominant inclination to be engaged in the giddy round of amusements.

I wish you to encourage, with all your reason and understanding, that love for the country whose scenes, occupations, and amusements, are suited to feeling, and uncorrupted minds ; it is there where benevolence receives its highest gratification ; for there, if fortune allows us not the power of relieving distresses equal to our wishes, yet, an affability of behaviour, the language of commiseration, and the lesser offices of humanity, all may offer, and will often afford consolation to the afflicted, far more valuable and efficacious than the bounty of ostentatious wealth.

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It is in the country alone, and in the midst of simple and innocent pleasures, that our minds are elevated, and our piety is strengthened; and if, after having made trial of dissipation, we seek the tranquillity of retirement, we shall soon be convinced of the superior happiness which results from such a life, as reflection can enable us to consider with complacency and satisfaction. There is a kind of natural void in the soul which religion alone can fill up so as to produce happiness; and the more powerful this sentiment becomes, the more internal comfort we shall possess: but, in tumult and dissipation, we cannot know its value, because we cannot feel its operations; it is only when the calm voice of reason is allowed to be heard that we can find a delight

light in devotion ; which consists, not in passing one's life on our knees, but in a continual endeavour to fulfil all the duties which religion requires us : in short, it is devotion, or religion, or piety, call it by what name you please, which alleviates our sorrows, and neightens our joys ; encreases our tenderness for all whom we love ; binds more firmly the ties of relationship ; banishes from our hearts all that is harsh, unfriendly, and austere ; and, above all things, induces us to do to others as we would they should do unto us. The severest duty loses all its severity, when, with grateful adoration, we consider the beneficence of our heavenly father ; and, under the influence of such an affecting consideration, we must be ashamed to lament
our

our trivial evils, whilst we are the objects of such extraordinary bounty, goodness, and beneficence.

Be not too sanguine in your expectations of worldly happiness; for, even in the most unclouded prospect, there must be much to frustrate your wishes: rather endeavour to gain that greatness of mind, that noble independence of spirit, which will raise you above the influence of every trifling misfortune; and do not suffer your peace and temper to be at the disposal of all around you. Share their sorrows, and, if possible, alleviate them; but remember, that the dignity of a reasonable being consists in the exertion of manly and noble fortitude.

Young people are too ready to yield to their imagination in picturing as
perfect

perfect all those they love ; and bitter is the sorrow which springs from a disappointment of such amiable expectations : but in all your connections, however large or various they may be, you will find in every character a great deal to pity and forgive : for, if you set out in life with the idea of meeting faultless friends, how can you feel that tenderness for their errors which is essentially necessary to the best objects and enjoyments of social happiness ?

If ever you feel yourself disposed to examine the faults of others, place in opposition all their good qualities, and estimate the whole with generous kindness, and compassionate justice. How much of your happiness must depend on cultivating such a temper ; for, in the daily intercourse, even of domestic
life,

life, how many circumstances must otherwise occur to disturb your spirits, and break in upon your peace. You possess, perhaps, the keenest sensibility, and the highest refinement, and are yet doomed to pass your days with those, by whom sentiment is deemed romance, and fine feelings are condemned because they are not understood. In such a situation all the indulgence of the most amiable disposition will be requisite to soothe your own regret, and preserve your mind in the habits of good humour and benevolence. At all events, those internal sources of happiness, to which I have so continually awakened your attention, will never fail to console and strengthen you in all the inconveniences and evils of life.

I have now only to express my sincere

cere hopes that these affectionate pages will be received as favourable to the cause I am so anxious to promote. Your mother offers no wishes for your acquisition of rank or fortune ; these are advantages only in proportion as they give power to benevolence, and splendor to virtue : my ambition soars beyond them. The prayer of my life has been, and the prayer of my dying hour will be, that *you may be good*.

For know this truth, enough for you to know,
Virtue alone is happiness below.

The only point where human bliss stands still,
And tastes the good without the fall to ill :

Where only merit constant pay receives,
Is blest'd in what it takes, and what it gives :

'The joy unequal'd, if its end it gain,
And if it lose, attended with no pain :

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Without

Without satiety, though ere so blest'd,
And but more relish'd as the more distress'd :
The broadest mirth unfeeling folly wears,
Less pleasing far than virtue's very tears :
Good from each object, from each place acquir'd,
For ever exercis'd, yet never tir'd ;
Never elated, while one man's oppress'd ;
Never dejected, while another's blest'd :
And where no wants, no riches can remain
Since but to wish more virtue, is to gain.



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